

Reflections on the infallibility of European Man - Part I (Saint Justin Popovich)

[Ξένες γλώσσες / In English](#)



1. After God, man is, without a doubt, the most mysterious and enigmatic entity in all the realms of human thought. At the bottomless depth of human existence there whirl contradictions which defy reconciliation: life and death, virtue and evil, God and devil, and all that exists in and around them. Through all its religions, philosophies, sciences, spiritual and materialistic civilizations, the human race has been trying to solve essentially one problem, one all-encompassing problem: the problem of man.



And from all these exertions and struggles it has fashioned for itself one supreme godhead, to be worshipped as the highest value and the foremost criterion. That ultimate godhead is «Man is the measure of everything.» That is to say, man is the measure of all being and of all things. However, through this method-his own

Divine majesty-man has failed to solve the problem of man. In measuring himself by himself he has failed to understand either himself or the world around him (cf. 2 Cor. 10: 12). He has labored in vain. He has mirrored a reflection in a looking-glass. And he has summed up everything in the agonized cry and the trembling confession: «By myself I know nothing» (1 Cor. 4: 4). «I know nothing by myself. I don't know what is man, nor what is God, nor what is death, nor what is life. And I feel with all my being that I am a slave to death, a slave to evil, and through my sins a slave to the devil.» The yield of all this human exertion has been to weave a body out of all the human race: «the body of death,» of which every man has become a part. And what is hidden within this body of death?-stench, putrefaction, maggots. «Wretch that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of this death?» (Rom. 7: 24).

No one, no one save the God-man because the God-man Christ triumphed over death by His Resurrection. He destroyed «the body of death» as an ontological reality (cf. Rev. 20: 14, 10). He redeemed the human race from death and granted the gift of eternal Life, eternal Truth, eternal Love, eternal Justice, eternal Joy, and all the other eternal Divine Virtues which can only be granted by the God of Love, the Lover of Mankind. And so He solved the problem of man, the entire problem of mankind. When God became man, he appeared as the God-man, and through his body-the Church-he has remained as God-man in this terrestrial world. He has become the ultimate value and the supreme criterion of the human race forever-the only True God and the only True Man, the only Perfect God and the only Perfect Man. As such He is the only supreme value and the only ultimate criterion of man's spiritual and physical being, of his theanthropic potential, and of all that is human and of man. Only in the God-man has man seen himself complete and eternal for the first time. He has recognized himself in all his dimensions. As a result a new general principle of value and knowledge applies to the human race: «The God-man is the measure of everything.» Nevertheless, «man is the measure of everything» continues to reign, to dominate for the most part, in the idolatrous and polytheistic non-Christian world *ferro ignique*. This led the Apostle Paul, the divinely enlightened student of man, and the God-man to summarize all the philosophies of the human race in two: the philosophy according to man, and the philosophy according to the God-man (Col. 2: 8).

2. Only the God-man is perfect, truly perfect Man, and simultaneously perfect God and perfect Man. Here the Hypostasis of God's Logos is the critical consideration. It was clearly interpreted and proclaimed by the divinely-inspired, saintly, God-bearing Fathers of the Fourth Oecumenical Synod at Chalcedon. In the God-man Christ, man has reached his ultimate perfection. Through God his soul has been

perfected and made complete, along with his conscience, his will, his mind, his heart, and his body; in a word, his entire being. And the most important of all miracles, truly worthy of our love, occurred: the God-man remained in this terrestrial world and in the entire universe as his Church, as His Body, so that every individual can join the fellowship of the body of the God-man and in this way achieve his full and complete perfection (cf. Eph. 3: 6). Only in the God-man and through the God-man can each human individual become truly human, completely human. Only with the God-man and his Church, and through his Church «with all the Saints,» is it possible to achieve «complete personhood, as measured by the stature and fullness of Christ» (Eph. 3: 18,4: 11-16). In the God-man Christ «there dwells bodily the entire fullness of the Godhead,» so that, in the Church and through the Church, the fullness of the Godhead can be bestowed on each one of us (Col. 2: 9-10). This, however, can be realized in each of us only «with all the saints,» through the holy mysteries and the Holy Virtues, and based on Holy Faith and Holy Love (Eph. 3: 17-20).

Without the God-man, man is in fact without a head, indeed without a self, without an eternal self, without an immortal God-like self. Without the God-man, man does not exist; there is only less-than-man, half-man, or no man at all. And at this point we must add the following truth: without the God-man, man is always a slave to death, a slave to sin, a slave to the devil. Only through the God-man does man realize his God-ordain-ed potential. He becomes «God by grace» and in this way achieves the full potential of his existence and his personhood. He reaches his Divine eternity through God's humanity. Living in the theanthropic body of the Church «with all the Saints» man achieves theosis by degrees, through the holy mysteries and the Holy Virtues. And he is filled with the joy of the holy mes-sage and the heavenly commandment of Saint Basil the Great: «A creature of God comes into existence and God is called.»¹ Created with the potential to become God-man, man strives, within the theanthropic body of the Church, to make his mind resemble that of God, to achieve transformation into God-mind. «We have the mind of Christ» (1 Cor. 2: 16). He even strives to resem-ble the will of God, to transform his will to God-will, and to make his body similar to the body of the God-man, to transform it to God-body. «The body is for the Lord and the Lord is for the body» (1 Cor. 6: 13). Theanthropized through the Church and in the Church, man reestablishes himself in his original God-like state, achieving this in ever-increasing measure through the Divine virtue of excellent Christ-like ideas (Gal. 4: 19,3: 27;Rom. 8: 29).

But without the God-man and inde-pendently of Him, man always risks the danger of becoming like the devil, since sin is simultaneously the strength and the icon of

the devil. Functioning independently of the God-man, man voluntarily reduces himself to a devil-like state of sin. He becomes a relative of the devil. «He that commits sin is of the devil» (1 John 3: 8). We must not forget that the principal objective of the devil is to deprive man of his God-like potential, to deanthropize him, to delete his Divinity, and to thus transform him into a being similar to himself. Humanistic anthropocentricity is in essence devilcenteredness. They both wish one thing: to belong only to themselves, to be only in themselves and for themselves. However, in this way, they actually bring themselves to the kingdom of the «second death» where there is neither God nor anything of God's (Rev. 21: 8,20: 14). That which has been discussed to this point is nothing other than the evangelical, apostolic, patristic, Orthodox humanism of God (Theohumanism, Theohominism).

3. All the European humanisms, from the most primitive to the most sophisticated, from the fetishistic to the papal, are based on a belief in man as he finds himself in the midst of his given spiritual and physical empirical situation and his historical context. In this view the entire essence of every humanism is man (homo), and encapsulated in the ontology of every humanism is nothing other than humanism (homo hominis). Man is the highest value, the supreme value. Man is the principal criterion, the ultimate criterion. «Man is the measure of everything.» That, at its core (in nuce), is every humanism, every hominism. Therefore, all humanisms, all hominisms are, in the final analysis, idolatrous and polytheistic in origin. Pre-Renaissance, Renaissance, and post-Renaissance-Protestant, philosophical, religious, social, scientific, cultural, or political -all the European humanisms strive consciously or subconsciously, but they strive unceasingly, for one result: to replace faith in the God-man with a belief in man, to replace the Gospel of the God-man with a gospel according to man, to replace the philosophy of the God-man with a philosophy according to man, to replace the culture of the God-man with a culture according to man. In brief, they seek to replace life according to the God-man with life according to man.

This has been developing for centuries until in the last century, in 1870 at the First Vatican Council, all these efforts achieved their pinnacle in the dogma of the infallibility of the Pope. This dogma subsequently became the central dogma of the papacy. In our own times, during the Second Vatican Council, this doctrine was discussed so persistently and so skilfully that the notion of its inviolability and inalterability was strongly reinforced. This doctrine has an overwhelming significance for the fate of European civilization, and for the apocalyptic times into which it has brought itself. Through this dogma all European humanisms have built their ideals and their idol: man has been declared the supreme godhead, the

ultimate godhead. The European humanistic pantheon has established its Zeus.

Honesty is the language of Truth: the dogma concerning the infallibility of the 20th century pope is nothing other than the rebirth of idolatry and polytheism, the rebirth of idolatrous value judgments and criteria. Horrible dictu, but this also has to be said: the dogma concerning the infallibility of the pope was introduced in the dogma of idolatrous humanism which, in the first instance, was Hellenic humanism. The value of everything was introduced as dogma. All characteristics of Hellenic culture and Hellenic civilization, their values, their philosophies, their crafts, their politics, their science were all introduced as dogma: «The measure of everything is man.» And what does this amount to? It is a recitation of the dogma of idolatry. In this manner the point in time arrived when the self-sufficiency of European man became dogma, an objective for which European humanisms have longed for nostalgically for centuries.

The dogma regarding the infallibility of the pope is the Nietzschean assertion-*Ja-Sagung*-extended to the entire conception of European humanism. *Ja-Sagung* is part of European culture and civilization, both of which are effectively idolatrous and polytheistic in their objectives and their methods. The Gospel and the Commandment of the God-man are «Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all (other things) shall be added to you» (Matth. 6: 33). But note what has been omitted from the proclamation of European humanistic culture and its civilization. There is no mention of the purpose of human existence or of the means by which man functions. The God-man is the Only Savior of man from his sins, from his death, and from the devil, the Only One who renews and immortalizes, who resurrects and elevates, who makes eternal and Divine, who theanthropizes man in all his worlds, and who categorically and clearly defines as the supreme purpose of the existence and the life of man that he should become perfect as God is perfect (Matth. 5: 48).

However, what did the European humanist not place, and what did he not dedicate as the purpose of human existence, in opposition to Him! The evangelical truth that «the entire world lies under the sway of the evil one,» requiring the efforts of the God-man on this earth, cannot be refuted (1 John 5: 19-21). Or, as stated by the holy apostle Paul, the devil is «the god of this age» (2 Cor. 4: 4). Between such a world which voluntarily «lies under the sway of the evil one» and the person who follows the God-man there is no common ground. He who follows the God-man is not allowed by the firm direction of Evangelic Truth to coexist with the humanist who justifies all of those things and declares them to be dogma. At this point it is always necessary to make a decisive, value-oriented determination and selection:

either the God-man or man. The humanist in all his efforts represents himself as acting with self-sufficiency as the supreme value and highest criterion. There is no place here for the God-man. In the kingdom of humanism the place of the God-man had been usurped by the *Vicarius Christi*, and the God-man has thus been exiled to Heaven. This surely results in a peculiar deincarnation of Christ the God-man, does it not?

Through the dogma of infallibility the pope usurped for himself, that is for man, the entire jurisdiction and all the prerogatives which belong only to the Lord God-man. He effectively proclaimed himself as the Church, the papal church, and he has become in her the be-all and end-all, the self-proclaimed ruler of every-thing. In this way the dogma of the infallibility of the pope has been elevated to the central dogma (*svedogmat*) of the papacy. And the pope cannot deny this in any way as long as he remains pope of a humanistic papacy.

4. In the history of the human race there have been three principal falls: that of Adam, that of Judas, and that of the pope. The principal characteristic of falling into sin is always the same: wanting to be good for one's own sake; wanting to be perfect for one's own sake; wanting to be God for one's own sake. In this manner, however, man unconsciously equates himself to the devil, because the devil also wanted to become God for his own sake, to put himself in the place of God. And in this self-elevation he instantly became devil, completely separated from God, and always in opposition to Him. Therefore, the essence of sin, of every sin (*svegreha*), consists of this arrogant self-aggrandizement. This is the very essence of the devil himself, of Satan. It is nothing other than one's wanting to remain within one's own being, wanting nothing within one's self other than oneself. The entire devil is found here: in the desire to exclude God, in the desire to always be by himself, to always belong only to himself, to be entirely within himself and always for himself, to be forever hermetically sealed in opposition to God and everything that belongs to God.

And what is this? It is egotism and self-love embraced in all eternity, that is to say: it is hell. For that is essentially what the humanist is-entirely within himself, by himself, for himself, always spitefully closed in opposition to God. Here lies every humanism, every homin-ism. The culmination of such satanically oriented humanism is the desire to become good for the sake of evil, to become God for the sake of the devil. It proceeds from the promise of the devil to our forefathers in Paradise-that with his help, «they would become as gods» (Gen. 3: 5). Man was created with theanthropic potential by God who loves mankind, so that he might voluntarily direct himself, through God, toward becoming God-man, based on the

divinity of his nature. Man, however, with his free will sought sinlessness through sin, sought God through the devil. And assuredly, following this road he would have become identical with the devil had not God interceded in His immeasurable love of mankind and in His great mercy. By becoming man, that is to say God-man, he redirected man toward the God-man. He introduced him to the Church which is his body, to the reward (*podvig*) of theosis through the holy mysteries and the blessed virtues. And in this manner he gave man the strength to become «a perfect man, in the measure of the fullness of Christ» (Eph. 4: 13), to achieve, that is, the Divine destiny, to voluntarily become God-man by grace. The fall of the pope is a consequence of the desire to substitute man for the God-man.

¹Patrologia Graeca, 35, 506.

Source: Justin Popovic, *Orthodox faith and life in Christ*, Belmont: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, c1994.